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TWO LETTERS

ON THE

INDUSTRIAL ARTS

OF

INDIA

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"*London* (you know) has a great Belly, but no palate; nor taste of Right and Wrong."

THOMAS HOBS, of Malmsbury.

LONDON

W. B. WHITTINGHAM & CO

91, GRACECHURCH STREET, 91

1879

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To

GEORGE C. M. BIRDWOOD, Esq., C.S.I., M.D.,
&c., &c.

1 *May*, 1879.

EAR SIR,—We, the undersigned, wish to express the thanks we owe you for the manner in which you have performed an important duty in your Report on the Articles of Indian Manufacture exhibited in Paris last year. In common with all who have given any attention to the subject, we have seen and lamented the rapid deterioration that has of late befallen the great historical arts of India. The independent and courageous criticism contained in your Handbook, founded on close observation and long experience, has shown us the causes that have been at work in bringing about this deterioration, and has given us a hope that something may yet be done to stay its further progress.

We do not doubt that all men of culture will agree with us in thinking that the welfare of the arts in

question is important both to India and to Europe, and that the loss of them would be a serious blow to civilisation, and an injury to the pleasure and dignity of life; and if this importance be at once admitted, together with the danger to them that comes of the manner in which they are now being dealt with by Europeans that are brought into contact with the Asiatic workmen, we cannot conceive that any thoughtful person will deny the responsibility of England in the matter, or the duty which a great country owes to the arts of exercising foresight and patience, lest for an apparent commercial gain she and the world in general should lose industries which have for ages made India famous, industries whose educational influence on the arts of the West is so universally acknowledged by all the students of Art and History.

At a time when these productions are getting to be daily more and more valued in Europe their sources are being dried up in Asia, and goods which ought to be common in the market at reasonable prices are now becoming rare Treasures for Museums or the Cabinets of rich men. This result seems to us the reverse of what commerce ought to aim at, and we cannot help thinking that when the producers and the public wake up to a knowledge of the facts in the case, they will be eager to restore these industries to their due position. We think they will have a

good chance of success if it be not then too late, and if no artificial obstacles be thrown in their way.

We therefore think that your remarks on these manufactures were both necessary and timely, and will be most useful in promoting a better understanding of the only conditions under which the so much admired Art of the East can flourish, or, in the long run, exist; and we beg once more to tender you our hearty thanks, in the full belief that in so doing we express the feelings of all lovers of Art who have read your excellent Report.

(Signed)

GEORGE AITCHESON.	BARROW H. ELLIS.
RUTHERFORD ALCOCK.	AUGUSTUS W. FRANKS.
THOMAS ARMSTRONG.	F. GARRARD.
EDWIN ARNOLD.	CARL HAAG.
G. P. BOYCE.	J. A. HEATON.
ANDREW CASSELS.	W. HERTZ.
T. CHENERY.	GEO. HOWARD.
C. PURDON CLARKE.	W. STANLEY JEVONS.
WALTER CRANE.	EDWARD BURNE JONES.
FRANK DILLON.	FRED. LEIGHTON.
HENRY DOULTON.	COUTTS LINDSAY.
M. E. GRANT DUFF.	JAMES D. LINTON.
ARTHUR ELLIS.	GEORGE J. S. LOCK.

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM.
NEVIL STORY MASKELYNE.
JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS.
WILLIAM MORRIS.
A. MORRISON.
LEWIS PELLY.
ROBERT PHILLIPS.
VAL. PRINSEP.
H. RAWLINSON.
RICHARD REDGRAVE.
VINCENT ROBINSON.
R. ROST.
T. L. SECCOMBE.
R. NORMAN SHAW.
R. H. SODEN SMITH.
W. G. SPOTTISWOODE.
W. STEBBING.
E. ALMA TADEMA.
W. T. THORNTON.
WILLIAM S. W. VAUX.
HORACE WALPOLE.
THOMAS WARDLE.
PHILIP WEBB.
MONIER WILLIAMS.
THOMAS WOOLNER.
H. YULE.

To

WILLIAM MORRIS, Esq., *and Others.*

INDIA OFFICE, 1 *June*, 1879.

GENTLEMEN,—In acknowledging your letter of 1 May, 1879, I must begin by frankly confessing to a feeling of intense personal pleasure.

Not less sincere is my satisfaction in receiving so weighty a testimony to the excellence of the historical handicrafts and hereditary craftmasters of India. Your approbation will do more even than last year's Paris Exhibition to quicken the growing popular interest in Indian art, and in the self-contained and self-supporting Indian communal life of which the arts of that country are the bright emanation. The unity in variety of Indian, as of all Eastern life, must never be overlooked by those who would understand the traditional arts of India and the East. It has a vital lesson for us, among whom, owing to our system of land tenure, those political

revolutions, which in the East rarely affect the democratic organisation of society, have so often destroyed the continuity of popular progress, to the manifest injury of the indigenous domestic arts, and of the higher forms of art, such as painting and sculpture, for which the people of the West have a far greater natural ability than those of the East. Art in England has, therefore, rather expressed sectarian views than the catholic sentiments of a people at complete unity with themselves; and this is why it has hitherto failed both in homely use and epic grandeur. It is only in times of its decay that men begin to talk of Art as being its own end and aim. In reality, Art is the highest expression of the whole moral and material condition of a people, and their ever strengthening incentive to a higher life. To impart this incentive has always been the purpose of Art wherever it has sprung from the life of a people; and where it does not serve this end, where, through social disorganisation, it is no longer rooted in national life, it fails in inborn vigour and originality, and ceases to exercise any elevating influence on national character.

The arts of India are indissolubly bound up with the popular institutions of the country; and, however much the Hindu may have erred from the right way, and obscured the light that is in him, he yet, as regards all the thoughts and intents of his heart, lives

in the unseen world of man's spiritual consciousness, by which he is influenced in every act of his life and in whatsoever he does to adorn life; and Art, the preservative of all the arts, is true to itself, and vindicates its participation in divineness only when it is inspired by the highest ideals of a people gathered together in natural and coordinated unity, as in the cooperative village communities of India.

In estimating the disturbing effect of European influences on the arts of India, we must avoid too exclusive and too indiscriminate blame of Schools of Art. The influence of Europe on the East is inevitable, and the presence in India of cultivated English gentlemen at the head of Schools of Art cannot fail in the end to correct the degrading effects of the necessary strain of European commerce on the village and sumptuary arts of India. After all, the chief offenders against Art in India are the official departments engaged in the manufacture of jail carpets, and the construction of public buildings; and it is particularly through the neglect of native architecture and the propagation of a bastard English style, blindly followed by the people themselves, that the Government threatens the slow destruction of the historical handicrafts of India. Art never long survives among a people who neglect architecture, the chief of the arts. All the minor arts in England suffered during the period of the decline of our

national building style, and our painting and sculpture still suffer, as is shewn in their prevailing anecdotal character, from their long disassociation with architecture. But in many parts of India, such as Rajputana and Kattyawar, a spontaneous native architecture survives. The late ALEXANDER KINLOCH FORBES, the author of "Ras Mala," was always seeking to obtain the employment of the native workmasters *(maestries)* of Kattyawar on public buildings of their own designing; and it is not yet too late for the Government, by the encouragement of native hereditary architects, not only to arrest the decadence of the arts of India, but to promote their revival. Schools of Art might become effective agents in this *renaissance*, only it is absolutely essential that their work should begin, where that of the native draughtsman always begins, with the study of architecture.

There is nothing in what has been advanced to justify the charge sometimes made of a desire to Orientalise the decorative arts of other countries. But every European, artificer and artist alike, might well take the handicraftsmen of India for an example in the patience, perseverance, and thoroughness which are the ground of their excellency, and by which the inspirations of art are wrought into reality and life. The legerdemain which some would fain substitute for patient labour in the arts destroys all mastery in their methods,

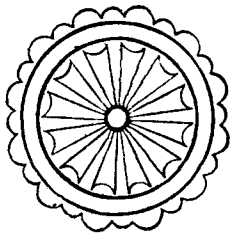
and at last dissipates the very sense of artistic imagery and invention. Labour is the probation of perfection. The innumerable ingenuities and subtle incommunicable graces of the arts can be obtained through labour alone: and their end and aim must, as is taught by all Eastern Art,

"By Nyle, or Gange, or Tygre, or Euphrate,"

be steadfastly set on the glory and enjoyment of the Most Highest, in whom is the Perfect Mastery and the Sum of Perfection.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE BIRDWOOD.



APPENDIX.

Extracts from a Lecture given by DR. BIRDWOOD *before the Society of Arts, February 26, 1879, on "Indian Pottery at the Paris Exhibition."*

THE principal varieties of Indian pottery suitable for exportation are the red earthenware pottery of Travancore and Hyderabad, the red glazed pottery of Dinapur, the black and silvery pottery of Azimghur and Surrujgurrah, and of Patan and Surat, the painted pottery of Kotah, the gilt pottery of Amroha, the glazed and unglazed pierced pottery of Madura, and the glazed pottery of Scinde and the Punjab. In all these varieties of Indian fancy pottery an artistic effect is consciously sought to be produced; but only the pottery made at Azimghur, and in Scinde and the Punjab, and the Bombay School of Art pottery were exhibited at Paris, and it is only of these examples that I can speak to-night.

The Azimghur pottery, like most of the art-work of the Benares district, and eastward, is generally feeble and rickety in form, and insipid and meretricious in decoration, defects to which its fine black colour, obtained by baking it with mustard oilseed cake, gives the greater prominence. The only tolerable example of it I have ever seen is the water-jug now exhibited, which attracts, and in a way pleases, because of the strangeness of look given to it by the pair of horn-like handles. The silvery ornamentation is done by etching the pattern, after baking, on the surface, and rubbing an amalgam of mercury and tin into it; thus producing the characteristic mawkish and forbidding effect, which, however, the unsophisticated potter of Azimghur does not attempt to mystify by calling it by any of those artful, advertising "cries" wherewith so much ado about nothing is sometimes made in English high art galleries. Very different is the glazed pottery of Scinde and the Punjab. The charms of this pottery are the simplicity of its shapes, the spontaneity, directness, and propriety of its ornamentation, and the beauty of its colouring. The first thing to be desired in pottery is beauty of form, that perfect symmetry and purity of form which is

"When unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

When we get it, we desire nothing more for the satisfaction of the eye. But for household use pottery must generally be glazed, and neither glazing nor colouring need detract from its dignity or comeliness, while

they often enhance the delicacy of surface necessary for the complete exposition of gracefulness of configuration. If any ornamentation is applied, it must be skilfully subordinated to the form to which it is superadded, so as not in any way to divert attention from it. Nothing can be in worse taste, nor, in an æsthetic sense, more wasteful, than to hide a lovely form under an excess of foreign ornament. It is really no less so to obscure it by producing the effect of birds and flowers floating about it, as is unintentionally done in so much English pottery, painted in perspective and with shadow; or by wilfully producing the illusion of a form dissimilar to the real form ornamented, as in Japanese pottery, in which the attempt is often deliberately made to distract the eye by the most violent optical surprises and deceits. On the other hand, in the best Indian pottery, we always find the reverent subjection of colour and ornamentation to form, and it is in attaining this result that the Indian potter has shewn the true artistic feeling and skill of all Indian workmasters in his handiwork. The correlation of his forms, colours, and details of ornamentation is perfect, and without seeming premeditation, as if his work were rather a creation of nature than of art—and this is recognised, even in the most homely objects, as the highest achievement of artifice. The great secret of his mastery is the almost intuitive habit of the natives of India of representing natural objects in decoration in a strictly conventional manner; that is to say, symmetrically, and without shadow. In this way, the outline of the form ornamented is never broken. The decoration is kept in subordination to the form also by the monotonous repetition of the design applied to it, or by the simple alternation of two, or, at the most, three designs. Also, never more than two or three colours are used, and when three colours are used, as a rule, two of them are merely lighter and darker shades of the same colour. It is thus that the Indian potter maintains inviolate the integrity of form and harmony of colouring, and the perfect unity of purpose, and homogeneity of effect of all his work. The mystery of his consummate work is a dead tradition now, he understands only the application of its processes, but not the less must it have been inspired in its origin by the subtlest interpretation of nature. The potter's art is of the highest antiquity in India, and the unglazed water-vessels, made in every Hindu village, are still thrown from the wheel in the same antique forms represented on the ancient Buddhistic sculptures and paintings. Some of this primitive pottery is identical in character with the painted vases found in the tombs of Etruria, dating from about B.C. 1,000. I do not suggest any connexion between them, it is only interesting to find that pottery is still made all over India, for daily use, which is in reality older than the oldest remains we possess of the ceramic art of ancient Greece and Italy. None of the fancy pottery made in India is equal in beauty of form to this primitive village pottery; and most of it is utterly insignificant and worthless. The only exception is the glazed pottery of Madura, and of

Scinde, and the Punjab. Madura pottery is Hindu in character, but that made in Scinde and the Punjab has been radically influenced by Saracenic [Persian] art, and must be distinguished as Indian.

The glazed pottery of Scinde is made principally at Hala, and that of the Punjab at Lahore, Multan, Jang, Delhi, and elsewhere. It is said that the invasion and conquest of China by Chingiz Khan, 1212, was the event that made known to the rest of Asia and Europe the art of glazing earthenware; but, in fact, the Saracens from the first used glazed tiles for covering walls, and roofs, and pavements, and of course with a view to decorative effect. The use of these tiles had come down to them in an unbroken tradition from the times of the "Temple of Seven Spheres," or Birs-i-Nimrud, at Borsippa, near Babylon, of the temple of Sakkara in Egypt, and of the early trade between China and Egypt, and China and Oman, and the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates. Glazed tiles had, however, fallen into comparative disuse before the rise of the Saracens, and it was undoubtedly the conquests of Chingiz Khan, A.D. 1206-27, which extended their general use throughout the nations of Islam. The glazed pottery of the Punjab and Scinde probably dates from this period, and, as we shall presently see, was directly influenced by the traditions surviving in Persia of the ancient civilizations of Nineveh and Babylon. It is found in the shape of drinking cups, and water bottles [pot=*poto*, I drink], jars, bowls, plates and dishes of all shapes, and sizes, and of tiles, pinacles for the tops of domes, pierced windows, and other architectural accessories. In form, the bowls, and jars, and vases may be classified as egg-shaped, turband, melon, and onion-shaped, in the latter the point rising and widening out gracefully into the neck of the vase.

In giving the following receipts of the different preparations used in enamelling Scinde and Punjab pottery, it is as well to say that they are of little practical value out of those countries. It will be noted that a great deal is thought, by the native manufacturers, to depend on the particular wood, or other fuel used, in the baking, which, if it really influences the result, makes all attempts at imitating local varieties of Indian pottery futile.

* * * * * * * *

The colours, after being reduced to powder, are painted on with gum, or gluten. The vessel to receive them is first carefully smoothed over and cleaned, and, as the pottery clay is red when burnt, it is next painted all over with a soapy, whitish engobe—prepared with white clay and borax, and *Acacia* and *Conocarpus* gums—called *kharya mutti*. The powdered colours are ground up with a mixture or *nishasta*, or gluten and water, called *mawa*, until the proper consistence is obtained, when they are painted on with a brush. The vessels are then carefully dried, and baked in a furnace heated with *ber*, or *Zizyphus*, or, in some cases, *Capparis* wood. The ornamental designs are either painted on off-hand, or a pattern is pricked out on paper, which is laid on the vessel and dusted

with the powdered colour along the prickings, thus giving a dotted outline of the design, which enables the potter to paint it in with all the greater freedom and dash. It is the vigorous drawing, and free, impulsive painting of this pottery which are among its attractions. The rapidity and accuracy of the whole operation is a constant temptation to the inexperienced bystander to try a hand at it himself. You feel the same temptation in looking-on at any native artificer at his work. His artifice appears to be so easy, and his tools are so simple, that you think you could do all he is doing quite as well yourself. You sit down and try. You fail, but will not be beaten, and practise at it for days with all your English energy, and then at last comprehend that the patient Hindu handicraftsman's dexterity is a second nature, developed from father to son, working for generations at the same processes and manipulations. The great skill of the Indian village potter may be judged also from the size of the vessels he sometimes throws from his wheel, and afterwards succeeds in baking. At Ahmedabad and Baroda, and throughout the fertile pulse and cereal-growing plains of Guzerat, earthen jars, for storing grain, are baked, often five feet high; and on the banks of the Dol Samudra, in the Dacca division of the Bengal Presidency, immense earthen jars are made of nearly a ton in cubic capacity.

The Indian potter's wheel is of the simplest and rudest kind. It is a horizontal fly-wheel, two or three feet in diameter, loaded heavily with clay around the rim, and put in motion by the hand; and once set spinning, it revolves for five or seven minutes with a perfectly steady and true motion. The clay to be moulded is heaped on the centre of the wheel, and the potter squats down on the ground before it. A few vigorous turns, and away spins the wheel, round and round, and still and silent as a "sleeping" top, while at once the shapeless heap of clay begins to grow under the potter's hand into all sorts of faultless forms of archaic fictile art, which are carried off to be dried and baked as fast as they are thrown from the wheel. Any polishing is done by rubbing the baked jars and pots with a pebble. There is an immense demand for these water-jars, cooking-pots, and earthern frying-pans and dishes. The Hindus have a religious prejudice against using an earthern vessel twice, and generally it is broken after the first pollution, and hence the demand for common earthenware in all Hindu families. There is an immense demand also for painted clay idols, and thus the potter, in virtue of his calling, is an hereditary officer in every Indian village. In the Deccan, the potter's field is just outside the village. Near the wheel is a heap of clay, and before it rise two or three stacks of pots and pans, while the verandah of his hut is filled with the smaller wares, and painted images of the gods and epic heroes. He has to supply the entire village community with pitchers and cooking pans, and jars for storing grain, and spices and salt, and to furnish travellers with any of these vessels they may

require. Also, when the new corn begins to sprout, he has to take a water-jar to each field for the use of those engaged in watching the crop. But he is allowed to make bricks and tiles also, and for these he is paid, exclusively of his fees, which amount to between £4 and £5 a year. Altogether he earns between £10 and £12 a year, and is passing rich with it. He enjoys, beside, the dignity of certain ceremonial and honorific offices. He bangs the big drum, and chants the hymns in honour of *Jami*, an incarnation of the great goddess *Bhowani*, at marriages; and at the *dowra*, or village harvest home festivals, he prepares the *burbut*, or mutton stew. He is, in truth, one of the most useful and respected members of the community, and in the happy theocratic organisation of Hindu village life there is no man happier than the hereditary potter, or *kumbar*.

We cannot overlook this serenity and dignity of his life if we would rightly understand the Indian handicraftsman's work. He knows nothing of the desperate struggle for existence which oppresses the life and crushes the very soul out of the English working man. He has his assured place, inherited from father to son for a hundred generations, in the national church and state organisation; while nature provides him with everything to his hand, but the little food and less clothing he needs, and the simple tools of the trade. The English working man must provide for house rent, coals, furniture, warm clothing, animal food, and spirits, and for the education of his children before he can give a mind free from family anxieties to his work. But the sun is the Indian workman's cooperative landlord, and coal merchant, upholsterer, tailor, publican, and butcher; the head partner from whom he gets almost everything he wants and free of all cost but his labour contribution toward the trades union village corporation of which he is an indispensable and essential member. This at once relieves him from an incalculable dead weight of cares, and enables him to give to his work, which is also a religious function, that contentment of mind and leisure, and pride and pleasure in it for its own sake, which are essential to all artistic excellence.

The cause of all of his comfort, of his hereditary skill, and of the theocratic constitution under which his marvellous craftsmanship has been perfected is the system of landed tenure which has prevailed in India, and stereotyped the social condition, and civilisation of the country from the time of the Code of Menu. The Indian *ryotwari* tenure, or system of peasant proprietorship, is first and most simply described in the Bible, in the xlvii. chapter of Genesis. In the seven years of plenty in Egypt, Joseph gathered the fifth part of all the grain grown in those plenteous years, and laid it up in the cities; and when the famine came, in the first year he gathered into Pharaoh's treasury all the money in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the corn which he sold to the starving people, and when their money failed, all their cattle; and in the second year, when their money was spent, and their herds gone, he

took from them all their lands, and even bought themselves into slavery, and fed them with bread for their lands and the service of their bodies for that year. Thus the whole land of Egypt became the property of king Pharaoh, and all the gold and silver of the people beside, and when only their bodies were left before him, they were sold in bondage to the king. And having swept away the ancient freehold proprietors of Egypt, Joseph made a new distribution of the land among the husbandmen, requiring them to pay in return one-fifth part of their crops as rent or tax into the king's treasury. This is the regular *ryotwari* tenure, with a very moderate assessment; for whereas in most Asiatic countries the assessment generally amounts to one-half the crop, Joseph only exacted one-fifth; and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the children of Israel, who dwelt in the land of Goshen, and had in possession the best of the land therein, prospered and multiplied exceedingly. The temple endowments, the lands of the priests, Joseph did not touch. This is a peculiarly interesting chapter for Anglo-Indians. In the end, only the legends of human pathos survive in history, and Joseph is popularly known chiefly in connexion with the story of his evil treatment by his brethren, and his touching requital of tenfold goodness into their bosoms. He was really the astute and far-sighted author of one of the greatest and most successful agrarian revolutions on record, beside which the revenue reforms of Todar Mal, under Akbar, and the "Cornwallis (Permanent) Settlement" of 1793, and the revenue survey of the North-West Provinces, by Robert Bird, in 1824, shrink into insignificance. The system of peasant proprietorship may possibly contribute indirectly to retard the advancement of a country, even where it does not conduce directly to the petrifaction of its civilisation, as in India. Under it the Hindoo ryot has become so strongly attached, by the most sacred and deeply rooted ties to the soil, that, rather than relinquish his hold on it, he will burden himself and his heirs with debt for generations; and gradually, under the Hindu practice of inheritance, the holdings become so minutely subdivided, and overburdened by mortgages, that extended cultivation and high farming are made almost impossible. Notwithstanding the superior education of the Scotch peasantry, and the livelong example of the benefits of high farming all around them, it is only in the last few years that the "portioners" of the Lothians and the Merse have learned to combine together to work their "common lands" by the steam plough. At this rate the village communities of the Deccan may be expected to postpone the scientific cultivation of the limitless arable soil of India to the Greek Kalends. It is a notable fact that while machinery should have been so readily applied in India to the production of textile and other manufactures, in which its use is injurious, its introduction in agricultural operations, in which it would so incalculably benefit the people, has been found impossible. It is quite impossible under the land system of the country at present. I remember a steam plough

being introduced with great *éclat* into the Bombay Presidency. It was led in procession into the field, wreathed in roses, and all of us who went to see it were wreathed with roses, and sprinkled with *attar*. But it was found impossible, utterly, to make any use of it. It was introduced into a fixed, crystallised sacro-economic system in which it had no place, unless as a new divinity, and a new divinity, and an idol it was made. It was put away into the village temple, and there, after a time, its great steel share was bedaubed red, and worshipped as a god. As a mere question of accounts, there can be no doubt of the solvency of India; but, owing to the restricted and imperfect cultivation of its soil, it is incapable of supporting the great cost of good government in modern times with the elasticity and buoyancy which would at once result from the proper development of its really inexhaustible agricultural resources. The country grows rich too slowly, and the demands of a scientific government increase on it too rapidly, and the reason of it undoubtedly consists in the Indian form of peasant proprietorship. Then again, under this system, as it has been elaborated in India, there is a great loss of personal and national energy. The whole community is provided for; every man in it has his ordered place and provision. There is no stimulus to individual exertion, and the mass of the people are only too well contented to go on for ever in the same old-fashioned conservative ways as their fathers from time immemorial before them. In England the law of primogeniture, while so hard on younger sons, by throwing them on their own resources, to provide for themselves in the free professions, in commerce and the colonies, has had the most beneficial influence on the energy of the race, and the growth of the wealth and political liberties and power of the country during the last two hundred years. Primogeniture, also, has given England a highly cultivated and powerful governing class: and every parish in the country has its "King in Israel." All this may be conceded, and even the desirability, in the last far-off result, of a change in the old order of village life in India, to something newer and more modern. It is only to be hoped that the inevitable revolution will be left alone to the tranquil operation of time, and of the economic causes by which the country is being gradually affected through its connexion with England.* Perhaps the first forward step in the new

* Virgil's maxim in the Georgics [Lib. ii. l. 412] has become famous:—

. . . . Laudato ingentia rura;
Exiguum colito.

Pliny, who alludes to these lines with approval, ascribes, indeed, the ruin of Italy to large estates. While proprietors were restricted by law to small holdings, and themselves cultivated their own farms, there was an abundance of provisions without the importation of grain, and the Republic could always command the services of a bold peasantry, their country's pride. But in after ages, when the property in the soil became engrossed by a few, and their overgrown estates were worked by slaves, Rome was forced to depend on other countries, both for food and to recruit her armies.—"Modum agri in primis servandum antiqui putavere. Quippe ita censebant, satius esse minus serere, et melius arare. Qua in sententia et Virgilium

departure will be taken by the much abused village *soucar*, or banker. The *ryot*, the pet lamb fatted up for the revenue commissioners' knife, is protected by the paternal Government against all others having a claim on his fleece.† The Government has only mercilessly to leave him alone with his secular enemy—the *soucar*, and the village fields would probably soon pass from the poor peasant proprietor to the rich banker, and held in fee simple, might at last be cultivated with the fullest advantage to the landlord and the State. Of course under such a system of unrestricted competition for the soil the communal villages would dissappear. The *ryotwari* tenure is very like freehold, but as it in benevolence to the ryot, allows him to retain his lands as long as he pays the assessment on them, although he may never cultivate them, it so far restricts the transfer and proper cultivation of the land. Also, among an ignorant peasant population, the periodical revision of the assessment, paternally devised in the ryot's own interest, only serves to

fuisse video. Verumque confitentibus latifundia perdidere Italiam: jam vero et provincias. Sex domini semissem Africæ possidebant, cum interfecit eos Nero princeps." Lib. xviii. Cap. vi. The whole of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of this book are of remarkable interest to readers of Indian experience. Compare also Thirwall's Greece II. 34; Diodorus I. 79; and Plutarch's Solon and Cæsar. Greece and Italy wonderfully explain India, while a knowledge of India enables us to quicken the pages of Greek and Roman history with vivid life. At every turn in the Mahratta country, in the hilly *mawuls*, the wayfarer comes on the bed of some mountain stream tufted all along its banks, and all over the little green eyots amid its waste of pebbles, with mixed tamarisk and sweet-scented oleander, which carry the beholder back at once to the Ilissus and wooded slopes of Mount Hymettus. The lovely, blushing oleanders are always found to shade some pure, clear pool left by the river in its summer flood, at which the gentle maidens and comely matrons of the near village are filling their water jars, forming—

". . . a group that's quite antique,
Draped lightly, loving, natural, and Greek;"

—as in the painting, on the Rogers' Vase, of the women of Athens filling their pitchers at the fair flowing fountains of Callirrhoe.

† The outcry against the village usurer is as ancient as the settlement of the land in the East. The fifth chapter of Nehemiah might be read as an extract from the Report of the Deccan Ryots Commission; and Nehemiah, in his paternal interposition between the Jewish cultivators and the Jewish usurers, is seen to have been actuated by exactly the same spirit as an Indian Civilian. Turning to the usurers, he addressed them: "It is not good that ye do, . . . I likewise and my brethren [the Revenue Commissioner and Collectors and their Assistants] might exact of them [the ryots] money and corn: I pray you let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them that they should do according to this promise. Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said Amen, and praised the Lord." Nehemiah v. 9-13. Nehemiah acted, indeed, on the ruling idea of the Indian Civilians that there should be no one between the Government and the ryots who cultivated the land, and paid the assessment thereon.

make him uncertain of the fixity of his tenure, and thus to restrict the improvement of his property. Even the annual settlement, which is not made to reassess the land, but to determine the amount of remission to be made for bad crops, and fields not cultivated, leads to the same result, and to unsettlement of mind, and ill-will toward the Government. The ryot schemes through all the year, even against his own best interest, to swell the remissions as much as possible, and is never quite satisfied with the amount actually allowed him. The whole of this indictment against the *ryotwari* tenure, prevailing over the greater part of India, may be conceded, but we owe to it all the primitive arts of India, and when it becomes disorganised and perishes, they too will sink and pass away for ever. Popular art cannot exist in the face of the stark competition ever fomented by the development of external commerce in all things, including the possession of the soil, and to which some theorists would sacrifice even national existence. We have already seen this in England. In the fifteenth century the agrarian revolution commenced in this country, which, in the end, accumulated the national lands in the hands of comparatively a few proprietors. It was then that the old rural townships began to fail in the competition with the foreign importations drawn to London; and more and more extended pasture farming became necessary to supply the wool, and woollen fabrics, skin, hides, leather, and cheese for exportation to the Continent. Under the growing pressure of competition for the land, Henry VIII. was tempted to the suppression of the monasteries, and the secularisation of their property led gradually to the general extinction of the old rural communities, in whose existence was now involved the whole tradition of democratic culture, and the continuity of popular progress in England. Still one third of the country was held in copyhold at the beginning of the seventeenth century. But just then began our great commerce round the Cape of Good Hope with India, and the investment of the fortunes made in it in land; and thus, at length, the self-dependent peasant proprietors were everywhere swept away, and with them the last refuge of the popular arts in England. There can in fact be no popular arts without popular traditions, and traditionary arts can arise only among a people whose social and municipal institutions are based in perpetuity on a democratic organisation of their inherent right and property in the national soil, such as is secured to the people of India by the *ryotwari* tenure. This it is which has created for them the conditions of society, so picturesque in its outward aspects, so unaffected and fascinating in its inner life, in which the arts of India originated, and on the permanence of which their preservation depends. For leagues and leagues round the old Mahratta cities of Poona and Sattara stretch fields of corn, and pulse and oil grains, and deep dyeing flowers, the livelier verdure of the rice fields following the courses of the more irriguous *nullahs* like a green thread wrought in gold; and rich orchards, and high groves of mango

mark the sites of the villages hidden in their shade. Glad with the dawn the men come forth to their work, and glad in their work they stand all through the noontide, singing at the well or shouting as they reap and plough; and when the stillness and the dew of evening fall upon the land like the blessing and the peace of God, the merry-hearted men gather with their cattle in long winding lines, to their villages again. Slowly, over all the wide champaign, the black lines shrink and disappear into the lengthening shadows of the mango trees, and the day is closed in night. Thus day follows day, and the year is crowned with gladness. It is in the contemplation of such scenes as these that the Englishman in India drinks deep of the bliss of knowing others blest. Do they not truly realise that life of contentment in moderation which is the favourite theme of Horace? Here is no

"Indigent starveling among mighty heaps."*

The accumulation of immoderate wealth is impossible,

"Yet far aloof is irksome poverty."

And are not these the conditions under which popular art and song have everywhere sprung?—and which are everywhere found essential to the preservation of their pristine purity? To the Indian land and village system we altogether owe the hereditary cunning of the Hindu handicraftsman. It has created for him simple plenty, and a scheme of democratic life, in which all are coordinate parts of one undivided and indivisible whole, the provision and respect due to every man in it being enforced under the highest religious sanctions, and every calling perpetuated from father to son by those cardinal obligations on which the whole hierarchy of Hinduism hinges. India has undergone more religious and political changes than any other country in the world; but the village communities remain in full municipal vigour all over the Peninsula. Scythian, Greek, and Saracen, Afghan, Mongol, and Mahratta have come down from the mountains, and Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, and Dane, up out of its seas, and set up their successive dominations in the land; but the theocratic trades union villages have remained as little affected by their coming and going as a rock by the rising and falling of the tide; and there, at his daily work, has sat the hereditary village potter amid all these shocks and changes, steadfast and unchangeable for 3,000 years, Macedonian, Mongol, and Mahratta, and Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Dane of no more account to him than the broken potsherds lying round his wheel. Could our deeply erring spendthrift School Boards improve on him?

The enamelled pottery of Scinde and the Punjab is a sumptuary and not a village art, and is probably not older than the time of Chingiz Khan. In all the imperial Mogul cities of India where it is practised,

* I quote Horace in Mr. Thornton's translation, the attraction of which, for those who have ceased to be at home in classical Latin, lies in the felicity with which, while literal, it preserves the grace and harmony of the original

especially in Lahore and Delhi, the tradition is that it was introduced from China, through Persia, by the Mongols, through the influence of Tamerlane's Chinese wife: and it is stated by independent European authorities that the commencement of ornamenting the walls of mosques with coloured tiles in India was contemporary with the Mongol conquest of Persia. But in Persia the ancient art of glazing earthenware had come down in an almost unbroken tradition from the period of the greatness of Chaldea and Assyria, and the name *kasi*, by which the art is known in Persia and India, is probably the same Semitic word, *kas*, glass, by which it is known in Arabic and Hebrew, and carries us back direct to the manufacture of glass and enamels, for which "great Zidon" was already famous 1,500 years before Christ. The pillar of emerald in the temple of Melcarth, at Tyre, which Herodotus describes as shining brightly in the night, "can," observes Kenrick, "hardly have been anything else than a hollow cylinder of green glass, in which, as at Gades, a lamp burnt perpetually." The designs used for the decoration of this glazed pottery in Scinde and the Punjab also go to prove how much it has been influenced by Persian examples, and the Persian tradition of the ancient art of Nineveh and Babylon. The "Knop and Flower" pattern, the origin of which I have discussed at length in the "Handbook to the Indian Court at Paris," and which we all know in Greek art as the "Honeysuckle and Palmette" pattern, appears in infinite variations on everything. The specimens exhibited to you illustrate this.

The Bombay School of Art pottery we owe chiefly to the exertions of Mr. Terry, the superintendent of the school. He has introduced potters from Scinde, but as yet I have never seen any pottery from the school in imitation of that made in Scinde and the Punjab, which is quite satisfactory; while that produced by the students of the school, who have set up as potters on their own account in Bombay, in imitation of the Scinde pottery, is simply detestable. The failure is particularly conspicuous in the blue, and blue and white ware, of which I have never seen a good specimen from the school or its pupils. Whatever of it comes from Hala, Multan, or Lahore is always superlatively fine—both in colour and design. One of the worst faults of the Bombay School of Art imitation pottery is in the application of the Scinde and Punjab decorative designs to vessels of Chinese and European forms. Latterly, however, Mr. Terry has been himself designing his school pottery, to which he is at last succeeding in giving a specific character of its own. In some of it the designs are adapted from the Ajunta cave paintings, and it is highly interesting to see Hindu mythological subjects drawn in the native manner under the direction of practised English draughtsmen; but the very best of the Terry-ware are the specimens in which the designs are wholly of Mr. Terry's own inspiration.*

I have gone thus much into the Indian potter's surroundings and

* It would appear from what was stated in the discussion on this paper, that Mr. Sparkes was the author of the original designs to which I here allude.

antecedents because it is only by a chronological and historical reduction that we can get at all profitably at the origin of an art. I need not say how much an intelligent study of the influences under which the arts of India have been produced and are sustained will help to a fuller understanding of the origin and development of Indo-European art generally. The languages and mythologies of the Indo-European nations were never recognised to be one, until the key to their unity was found in the sacred language and religion of the Hindoos, and the scientific investigation of Indian art will not fail to lead to profitable, and, perhaps, even surprising results. But, personally, I view the matter from totally another point. Nothing conduces more than such studies, and the conclusions to which we now see they almost invariably lead, to free men from all jealousies of race, and international prejudices, and all narrow provincial and insular ideas. Europe and Asia are one continent, and the English and Hindu one family, united by a common origin, language, and history; and the more widely this is seen and felt, the more will they become united by a common sympathy in all the higher, nobler aims of life. To promote, so far as in me lies, a mutual sympathy between the Aryas of England and the Aryas—and Mongols and Daysus also—of India, is my first purpose, and I trust it will be your first interest—if I have succeeded in interesting you at all—in this paper.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. ANDREW CASSELS said he was afraid that art in India was very much degenerating. The Cashmere shawls of to-day were not to be compared with those produced 50 years ago, and this he attributed to the bad designs sent out from France. There was also a great falling off in the silver work which came from India, and this he traced to the fatal influence coming from Birmingham. All the old original shapes were disappearing, and in Cutch and elsewhere they were adopting in their place designs which found more favour in England. The carpets of India were not the same as they used to be, and he feared the common-place designs produced in the jails were producing a bad effect on the manufacture generally. In like manner the imitation of modern art was gradually undermining and destroying the more pure and beautiful native art of India. Nothing could be more beautiful than some of the native colours, and no nation in the world better understood their combination. He for one, deeply regretted what he considered the degradation of Indian art.

Mr. KIPLING (Principal of the Mayo School of Industrial Art at Lahore) agreed with the last speaker that there was an undoubted decadence in Indian art all along the line. He could not say that it was the

breaking up of the village system that had brought this about, for he thought they really had to blame the march of civilisation. The steam-engine, with all the material benefits which it had brought, was bringing to the natives of India many serious disadvantages. As regards these beautiful examples of archaic art, their very excellence, their simplicity and beauty, were disturbed by the introduction of modern ideas. If you could establish a kind of artistic Custom-house at Bombay and other ports, which would stop every article from Birmingham, or Manchester, or of Parisian or Prussian manufacture, no doubt you could preserve the people from artistic deterioration, but otherwise he feared not. It was to be hoped, however, that when the public saw a good thing whether it came from the Bombay School of Art or elsewhere, they would buy it at once, and not grudge the price they gave for it, because they might be sure that the law of supply and demand would not be abrogated, and that it would produce some good effect. At present, all the new architecture of India was designed by the Public Works Department, which included a most excellent and admirable body of engineers who naturally worked on English traditions, and did not see the beauty of the indigenous architecture of the country.

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Mr. GRIFFITHS (of the School of Art at Bombay) thought Dr. Birdwood had been rather hard on Mr. Terry, considering the difficulties he had to contend against, and especially as he paid for this pottery out of his own pocket, the Government giving no aid beyond finding accommodation. As for the statement that they copied Doulton ware, he could vouch for it that they never saw any of it in Bombay.

Dr. BIRDWOOD said they sent for samples to copy. He had seen the correspondence.

Mr. GRIFFITHS believed this was a mistake. Again, stencilling was a thing never resorted to. Again, he understood Dr. Birdwood to say that English draughtsmen drew the designs, but that was not so--they were all done by Indian workmen; and the manufacture was under the superintendence of the best man Mr. Terry could procure from Scinde. Mr. Terry designed none of the patterns himself; the students themselves designed them. The first batch which Mr. Terry sent to Messrs. Howell and James they admired very much, as regards colour and so on, but they could not sell them, because there was no demand. He thought Mr. Terry had been rather hardly dealt with.

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Mr. SPARKES (Master of the South Kensington School of Art) was anxious to reconcile the apparently contradictory statements of Dr. Birdwood and Mr. Griffiths. He remembered the first lot of pottery

which came from the Bombay School of Art to Messrs. Howell and James; the pots were made of very fragile material, and were nearly all broken; but from those which remained, and the pieces of the others which could be put together, the forms were found to be singularly hideous, and they would not sell at all. They, therefore, asked him if he would give them some tracings or outlines of forms which had been found useful at Lambeth, and he believed some of those tracings were sent to Mr. Terry, with what result he did not know. But, at any rate, the letters Dr. Birdwood referred to were those in connection with the traced outlines of forms which were found to be successful in England.* He was not aware that any Doulton ware had ever been sent to India, at any rate he could see no trace of its influence on the productions of the Bombay School of Art. He knew nothing of the School, but he could not help thinking that Dr. Birdwood had been a little hard upon it. His view of the case was that Mr. Terry—and whoever was to be thanked for that effort had exactly the same instinct as he had himself—was anxious to graft on to the native handicraft a new development and perhaps to introduce a new manufacture altogether in the district, and he looked about for materials close at hand which his native artisans could work into pottery, whilst he very properly sent to Scinde for a technical workman to direct the operations. The students then went to the Ajunta caves, copied the decorations, and adapted them to the pottery, and that seemed perfectly legitimate. Mr. Terry, at present, he took it, was merely feeling his way; but it must come to a good end, if he could graft a new manufacture on to the native tact and taste. The forms he had hitherto seen had been archaic and rude to a degree, and, probably, the instincts, to which we owed many bits of Indian pottery, might be ruder ones, in this sense—that the natives might have the sense only of one form, and it might be impossible for them to perceive others which, to educated eyes, were more graceful. The value of this Indian ware had hardly been sufficiently dwelt upon. No one had been more successful in imitating some of these beautiful combinations of blue and turquoise than Deck, of Paris; but those beautiful vases of Deck's, which were enormously expensive, were harder, and, to his taste, less artistic than some of these rougher articles from India. The difference was that Deck's were more or less copied, and these were the pure products of the instincts of an artistic people. The influence of these things had been very great on English manufactures. No branch of the art *faïence* of Messrs. Doulton had been more admired than the Persian Section, which was in fact based on these combinations, but they were unable to reproduce the same colours, and they were obliged to substitute for them what came nearest.

* Not only so. A correspondence in which examples of the actual Doulton *ware* were ordered expressly to be shewn to the students of the School, still exists. In a letter since received from Bombay, it is, however, stated that no copies have been made in the School of these examples.

Each material employed, the fire in which it was burned, the colours and the glaze which covered them, were all factors in the result, and if any one were changed the result was different. It was therefore perfectly fallacious to give recipes for colours or glaze, or anything else. The work must develop itself, and he felt sure that the Bombay School would develop; and there was ample room in England and on the Continent to absorb all that could be made both here and in India.

Dr. BIRDWOOD, in concluding the discussion, said his chief object was to interest the world of art in England in Indian pottery; he wanted to advertise and increase a new Indian export. He regretted that any awkwardness of expression on his part, either in the "Handbook on the Indian Court," or in the present lecture, should have led anyone to suppose that he was unjust to Mr. Terry. He read the passages complained of, and asked if they really bore a meaning adverse to his (Mr. Terry's) labours in Bombay. No one more appreciated Mr. Terry's quick sympathy with native art, and enthusiastic efforts to introduce the manufacture of glazed pottery into Bombay. He only condemned the imitated ware, or what of it he had ever seen. He felt, however, that the School of Art imitated ware was discredited by the work of its pupils, who had set up as potters on their own account. It was true that they had a Scinde potter at the school, but he seemed to have lost his cunning in Bombay, if the imitation Scindian pots sent to this country were of his handiwork. He left it to the audience to judge between the pots and pans on the table from Scinde and those from the Bombay School of Art. The genuine Terry ware—he meant the things of Mr. Terry's own (or Mr. Sparkes's) designing, and having an original, specific, and local character of their own—he highly prized. * * * Mr. Terry was bravely essaying to rival an art of three thousand years growth in India, and no one more sincerely and warmly wished him success than himself.

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